There has been regular and close interaction at political and official levels in recent years, in which both countries have emphasised their resolve to foster the bilateral relationship for mutual benefit.

The External Affairs minister led the Indian delegation to the 11th meeting *of* the Indo-Iran Joint Commission that was held in Tehran in May this year. At the Joint Commission meeting, it was decided that the two countries will intensify their ties in the fields of energy, agriculture, science & technology, transport, communications, trade, commerce, culture and education.

Role of India in Sri Lanka crisis

555. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Lanka Civil War, India see no immediate break through" in the Hindustan Times dated 31st May, 2000;

(b) if so, whether India has assessed the latest civil war position in Northern Sri Lanka as one heading towards no-win situation for both sides; and

(c) if so, whether in the light of the assessment made by India, what role Government is going to play in this war?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In Government's view, there can be no military solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. India has consistently supported a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, where all communities can realise their aspirations and a lasting peace can be restored. India could play a helpful role only if all sides ask *it* to *do so.*